

‘Join in imitating me’ (Philippians 3.17) Towards an Interpretation of Philippians 3*

ANGELA STANDHARTINGER

*Fachbereich Evangelische Theologie, Philipps-Universität Marburg, Lahntor 3,
135037 Marburg, Deutschland*

Philippians 3 is central to the question of integrity of the letter. While those who argue for three fragments struggle with the intention of the chapter, those who argue for the letter’s integrity vote for its function as an exemplum. This article argues that there is some truth in both positions. Philippians 3 imitates the Jewish testament genre in which an ideal biography is depicted to become a model of religious advice. But while Paul deals critically with genre, he became a religious hero in the canonical letter, which was edited by the Philippians in the early second century CE.

Keywords: polemical letter, testament, Philippians 3, composition theory, martyrdom, imitation

One of the main questions in research on the Philippians is whether the letter in its canonical form was a homogeneous text or whether it was a subsequent compilation of several fragments. Philippians 3 plays an important role in this discussion. While some find there a polemical fragment directed against Philippian opponents, others argue that this chapter is integral to the argumentation of the letter as a whole.

In the following, I pursue the content and contextual function of Phil 3 further. First, I review the main arguments for and against the integrity of the letter, addressing the suggested purpose and function of this chapter respectively. Then, I present two ways of reading Phil 3: one reads 3.2–21 and 4.8–9 as a fragment of a farewell address, written during a life-threatening imprisonment, and another which ponders over the function of Phil 3.2–21 within the general narrative line of the canonical letter. In doing so, I propose to address the questions of date and place of composition.

* Short main paper read at SNTS General Meeting at Sibiu, Romania, 2007.

1. The Composition Theory

In the early nineteenth century, Johann Heinrich Heinrichs and Eberhard Gottlob Paulus suggested for the first time a literary-critical composition theory for Philippians.¹ Both researchers observed a change of tone at the beginning of ch. 3. While chs. 1 and 2 are directed to the community as a whole, chs. 3 and 4 address only its leaders. However, in the nineteenth century, further research spearheaded by Ferdinand Christian Baur questioned the Pauline origin of the entire epistle, among other reasons for a ‘Mangel an einem tiefer eingreifenden Zusammenhang und gewisse[r] Gedankenarmuth’.² Current discussion of the composition theory was developed in the late 1950s by Walter Schmithals, Johannes Müller-Bardorf, Bruce D. Rahtjen, and others.³ It is based on three main observations:⁴

1. A break and a sharp change of tone occurs between 3.1 and 3.2.⁵ After the call to rejoice, Paul turns inexplicably to the threefold warning against foreign missionaries. This group of opponents is not comparable to those addressed in Phil 1.15–18 and 1.28.⁶
2. There is more than one letter ending in Phil 4.4–7, 4.8–9, and 4.20–23.

1 J. H. Heinrichs, *Pauli Epistolae ad Philippenses et Colossenses Graece perpetua annotatione illustratae* (Novum Testamentum Graece 7,2; ed. Johann Koppe; Göttingen: Dieterich, 1803) 32–8; 88–9. H. E. G. Paulus reviews the disputation of J. F. Krause at Königsberg, 1811, in the *Heidelbergischen Jahrbüchern für Literatur* 7.44 (1812) 702–4. Krause was asked to deal with Heinrich’s new edition of ‘Kopp’s New Testament’ of 1803. Paulus did not agree with Krause’s rejective criticism and instead ventured new thoughts. Based on the change of tone, he separates a part of 3.1 to 4.9 in which the apostle ‘ohne Rücksicht mit solchen spricht, von denen er missverstanden zu werden nicht befürchte’ (702).

2 F. C. Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi II* (Leipzig: Fues, 1867) 59.

3 W. Schmithals, ‘Die Irrlehrer des Philipperbriefs’, *ZThK* 54 (1957) 297–341; J. Müller-Bardorf, ‘Zur Frage der literarischen Einheit des Philipperbriefs’, *WZ(J).GS* 7 (1957/58) 591–604; B. D. Rahtjen, ‘The Three Letters of Paul to the Philippians’, *NTS* 6 (1959–60) 167–73. See also G. Bornkamm, ‘Der Philipperbrief als paulinische Briefsammlung’, *Geschichte und Glaube II* (Munich: Kaiser, 1971) 195–205; L. Bormann, *Philippi. Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (NTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 87–136.

4 Some external indicators are also mentioned. Some canonical lists name several letters to the Philippians; see Rahtjen, ‘Three Letters’, 167–8. The pseudo-epigraphical *Epistle to the Laodiceans*, which is a compilation on the basis of Philippians, uses only Phil 1.1–3.1; 4.8–9, 20–23 (see P. Selw, ‘Laodiceans and the Philippians Fragments Hypothesis’, *HTHR* 87 [1994] 17–28). On Pol. *Phil.* 3.2, see below.

5 Schmithals, ‘Irrlehrer’, 298–9; Bornkamm, ‘Philipperbrief’, 195–7.

6 The missionaries mentioned in Phil 1.15–18 are not residing in Philippi and the ἀντικεῖμενοι of Phil 1.28 are not missionaries.

Especially 4.1–3 or 4.4–7 could well be understood as direct continuation of 3.1.⁷

3. Phil 4.10–20 is better understood as a formal receipt and thank you note for the donation brought by Epaphroditus. This implies an immediate dispatch of the letter.⁸ However, the message gleaned from Phil 2.25–27, namely that Epaphroditus is still with Paul in prison and recuperating from mortal affliction, would appear to contradict that. Consequently some time must have elapsed between the writing of Phil 4.10–20 and chs. 1–2.⁹

Philippians, according to this hypothesis, consists of a collection of three letters or letter fragments: the letter of receipt or the thank you note A (Phil 4.10–20), the letter from prison B (Phil 1.1–3.1 and 4.4–7 [4.1–3, 20–23]) and the polemical letter C (Phil 3.2–21; 4.8–9 [4.1–3]).¹⁰

Chronologically, the writing of the letters or fragments is unanimously seen to run along the lines of A–C.¹¹ While the temporal distance between the thank you note A (4.10–20) and the letter from prison B (1.1–3.1; 4.1–7, 20–23) can be gauged by Epaphroditus' sickness and recuperation, there is no consensus as to where and when the so-called polemical letter C (3.2–21; 4.8–9) was written.¹² In these inter-

- 7 Further epistolographical observations are that travelling plans (2.19–30) and news concerning co-workers are normally positioned at the end of a letter (e.g. 1 Cor 16), τὸ λοιπὸν and χάριτε often mark the close of a letter (Gal 6.17; 2 Cor 13.11).
- 8 Bormann, *Philippi*, 112–14, points out that a homogeneous reading of 1.1–3.1 and 4.10–20 must appeal to secondary auxiliary argumentation like previous verbal thanks, prevention by conditions of imprisonment or the unwillingness of Paul to offer thanks, an argument which does not conform to the legal character of the receipt (4.10–20, shown by A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten* [Tübingen: Mohr, 4th ed. 1923] 88–90).
- 9 Bornkamm, 'Philippbrief', 198–9.
- 10 Since Phil 4.8 seems to refer to 3.15–17, it is usually assigned to letter C. The placing of 4.1–9 and 20–23 is debated in various theories. A detailed list is provided by Bormann, *Philippi*, 115. The greetings from the house of Caesar in 4.20–23 fit well with Phil 1.13. But especially problematical is the placing of 4.1–3: the conjunction ὅστε is neither made necessary by 3.1 nor by 3.21. Phil 4.1–3 is the only evidence of an actual conflict within the community, which, however, is not introduced anywhere. Stylistically, the verses fit well into 1.1–3.1. See also U. Poplutz, *Athlet des Evangeliums, Eine motivgeschichtliche Studie zur Wettkampfmotaphorik bei Paulus* (HBS 43; Freiburg: Herder, 2004) 295–6.
- 11 Besides this three-letter hypothesis, some scholars prefer a two-letter hypothesis. Up to the 1990s, the so-called polemical letter (3.2–21/4.3 and 4.8–9) was seen as the second letter (e.g. J. Gnllka, *Der Philippbrief* [HThKNT X/3; Freiburg: Herder, 1968]). Since then, some scholars find in 4.10–20, the thank you note or receipt (4.10–20) a second piece of writing (e.g. J. T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity* [JSNTSup 136; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997] 409–12).
- 12 Some interpreters suspect a composition after the intermediate visit mentioned in 2 Cor 7.5 (Müller-Bardorff, 'Frage', 599–601; Gnllka, 'Philippbrief', 25), or at least in temporal vicinity to 2 Cor 10–13 (Bornkamm, 'Philippbrief', 201). Others support a composition in the con-

pretations the attack on the opponents (in Philippi?) is perceived as the main reason for writing. It appears to me that here lies the weak link of the ‘composition theories’. The particular fragment Phil 3.2–21 and 4.8–9 consists mainly of an explicit biographical part (3.4–14/15a) that branches off into parentheses (3.15b–17; 4.8–9) and an eschatological perspective (3.20–21). The term ‘polemical letter’ (‘Kampfbrief’) unilaterally emphasizes the opposition front (in Philippi?) which is mentioned only in 3.2–3 and 3.18–19. This, in my opinion, does not sufficiently determine the purpose of writing letter C.

2. Theories that Assert Integrity of the Philippians

The thesis for the integrity of Philippians gained increasing support after the 1980s, but this was not due to the difficulty in determining the purpose of letter C. Rather, composition theories were generally questioned, because they seemed too complex and hypothetical.¹³ Three levels of arguments are used to respond to the three-letter hypothesis. First, the literary criticism can be countered by the following arguments:

1. The abrupt transition from 3.1 to 3.2 only came about by incorrect translation,¹⁴ as a common change of tone¹⁵ in a letter of friendship or a deliberately used

text of the appearance of the opponents in Galatia (J. Becker, *Paulus. Der Apostel der Völker* [Tübingen: Mohr, 3rd ed. 1998] 340–50), or shortly before the final collection journey to Jerusalem (Poplutz, *Athlet*, 350).

- 13 The popular appeal to the manuscript-tradition beginning at the end of the second century is no strong argument. The hypothesis of a compilation of letters does not require that the fragments had ever been read outside of Philippi. H.-J. Klauck, ‘Compilation of Letters in Cicero’s Correspondence’, *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. J. T. Fitzgerald, T. H. O’Brien, and L. M. White; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 131–55, has shown within the collection of Cicero’s letters that the combination of letters did happen, but in a far less complex manner than the hypotheses regarding *Philippians* or *2 Corinthians* would require. However, Cicero’s letters are the only known later literary collection of letters originally intended for ‘practical’ use in antiquity. The history of the manuscript and edition complicates matters considerably. While the editors of Cicero’s letters apparently preserved the whole and made additions only at the end of letters, the papyrus letters portray a different praxis. The collection provided by J. L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), shows that inserted letters were regularly shortened at least as to the addressing and closing formulations and occasionally even elsewhere (see 217–18).
- 14 Τὸ λοιπὸν (3.1a) is understood as a transitional particle meaning ‘furthermore’ and therefore hardly marks the end of the letter (see: 1 Thess 4.1; 1 Cor 7.39). Ἀσφαλές (3.1b) means ‘steadfast’, not ‘safe’. See J. Reed, ‘Philippians 3:1 and the Epistolary Hesitation Formulas: The Literary Integrity of Philippians, again’, *JBL* 115 (1996) 63–90 (76–78).
- 15 L. Alexander, ‘Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians’, *JSNT* 37 (1989) 87–101 (99).

16 rhetorical method. Philippians 3.1 could be interpreted as a transitional sentence,¹⁶ as reassurance about the relationship between author and addressees (hesitation formula)¹⁷ or as an indicator of the turning point in the argument.¹⁸ The imperative βλέπετε in 3.2 does not imply a warning.¹⁹

2. The difficulty encountered in placing 4.1–9 and 20–23 shows that they are definitely not different endings of letters.²⁰
3. The thank you note for the donation, Phil 4.10–20, is placed late for reasons of argumentation.²¹ This part of the letter does not require a different situation, because Epaphroditus could as well have fallen ill during the voyage and recovered after his arrival.²²

However, repetition of key words and the recurrence of certain motifs are brought into play as the main evidence for the integrity of Philippians.²³ In his survey of earlier observations, Jeffrey Reed picks out 27 words that are to be found in chs. 1–2 and ch. 3 or chs. 1–2 and 4.1–10.²⁴ The repetition of key words, however, is of little informative value. By the same method one could even try to prove the fragment 2 Cor 7.5–16 belongs to Philippians, 31 words being common to both 2 Cor 7.5–16 and Philippians.²⁵ By excluding the words that appear only in Phil 3.2–21 and

16 M. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC 11; London: Hendrickson, 1998) 175–82: 'interim conclusion'.

17 Reed, 'Philippians 3:1', 65–72, discovered a formulation in the phrase μη̄ ὄνει/μη̄ ὀκνήση γράφειν ('do not hesitate [to write]') or οὐ μη̄ ὀκνήσω ('I shall not hesitate'), respectively, that closes a narrative in the middle of a letter (2.25–30). The formulation marks an interruption of the imperatives in 2.29 and 3.2 by 2.30. But see also A. du Toit's criticism in 'Rezension', *Biblica* 79 (1998) 293–7 (295): 'It would certainly strengthen his argument if we could also find examples of οὐκ ὀκνηρόν used in this way'.

18 P. Wick, *Der Philipperbrief. Der formale Aufbau des Briefes als Schlüssel zum Verständnis seines Inhalts* (BWANT 135; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994) 54–8.

19 D. Garland, 'The Composition and Unity of Philippians', *NT* 27 (1985) 141–73 (165–6).

20 Reed, *Discourse*, 146–9.

21 Garland, 'Composition', 152–3 and above n. 8.

22 Garland, 'Composition', 150–2; Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (SNTSMS 112; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001) 24–6.

23 T. E. Pollard, 'The Integrity of Philippians', *NTS* 13 (1966–67) 57–66, 62–5; Garland, 'Composition', 157–61; Holloway, *Consolation*, 29–31.

24 ἀπόλεια (1.28; 3.19); δόξα (2.11; 3.19–20); ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (2.5; 3.13–14); ἐπίγειον (2.10; 3.19); ἐπιποθ- (1.8; 2.26; 4.1); ἐπουράνιοι (2.8; 3.20); εὐρίσκω (2.7; 3.9); ἡγήομαι (2.6; 3.7); θάνατος (2.8; 3.10); θυσία (2.17; 4.18); καρπός (1.22; 4.17); κέρδος (1.21; 3.7); κοινωνία (1.5; 2.1; 3.10; 4.14–15); κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (2.11; 3.8, 20); μορφή (2.6–7; 3.10, 20); περισσεύω (1.26; 4.12, 18); πολιτευ- (1.27; 3.20); σκοπέω (2.4; 3.17); σταυρός (2.8; 3.10); στήκω (1.27; 4.1); συναθλέω (1.27; 4.3); σχῆμα (2.7; 3.21); σωτηρία (1.28; 3.20); ταπεινώω (2.3; 3.21; 4.21); ὑπάρχω (2.6; 3.20); φρονέω (2.2, 5; 3.15, 19; 4.10); χαίρω (1.18; 2.2, 17–18; 3.1; 4.1, 10). Reed, *Discourse*, 140–1.

25 ἀγνός (Phil 4.8; 2 Cor 7.11); (κατ)αισχύνειν (Phil 1.20; 2 Cor 7.14); ἀλήθεια (Phil 1.18; 2 Cor 7.14); ἀπολογία (Phil 1.7, 16; 2 Cor 7.11); αὐτὸ τοῦτο (Phil 1.6; 2 Cor 7.11); βλέπειν (Phil 3.2; 2 Cor 7.8) γράφειν (Phil 3.1; 2 Cor 7.12); (ἀπεκ)δέχασθαι (Phil 3.20; 4.18; 2 Cor 7.15); ἐπιποθεῖν

4.8–9, 2 Cor 7.5–16 would have the same number of 27 shared words, while being 114 words shorter than Phil 3.2–21 and 4.8–9. The repeated use of certain words could possibly indicate the same author, but in no way an integral composition.²⁶

More decisive than formal parallels in wording would be to prove a specific use or meaning of terms throughout the letter. Therefore appeal is often made to the repetition of rarely used words in the Corpus Paulinum; the foremost example is πολιτεύεσθε, πολίτευμα in Phil 1.27 and 3.20, both *hapax legomena*. However, the discussion of πολιτεύεσθαι and πολίτευμα is overshadowed by the controversy concerning whether to understand πολιτεύεσθαι in 1.27 as a call to social responsibility in the world²⁷ or as reference to Christian identity from the heavenly πολίτευμα.²⁸ In the context of Phil 1.27, πολιτεύεσθε does not exclusively refer to the gospel, but mainly to the ‘suffering for Christ’ (1.29).²⁹ Through this term, the Philippian community is shown the way of Christ as described in the christological hymn, emptying himself at the point of death (2.6–8). An exaltation in the sense of *per aspera ad astra* is neither in the hymn nor elsewhere in the context of Phil 2. It is God who is exalted and shares divine honour with the human Jesus (2.9–10).

In 3.20, on the other hand, πολίτευμα is a heavenly (ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει) entity.³⁰ Out of (ἐκ) it Christ is expected as κύριος and σωτήρ. The movement of

(Phil 1.8; 2.26; 2 Cor 7.7); ἔχειν (Phil 1.7, 23, 30; 2.2, 27, 29; 3.9, 17; 2 Cor 7.5); ζῆλος (Phil 3.6; 2 Cor 7.7, 11); ζημιούν (Phil 3.8; 2 Cor 7.9); θάνατος (Phil 1.20; 2.8, 27, 30; 3.10; 2 Cor 7.10); θλίψις (Phil 1.17; 4.14; 2 Cor 7.14); κατεργάζεσθαι (Phil 2.12; 2 Cor 7.10–11); καθυ- (Phil 1.28; 2.16; 3.3; 2 Cor 7.14); κόσμος (Phil 2.15; 2 Cor 7.10); λύπη (Phil 2.27; 2 Cor 7.10 c.f. 7.8–9, 11); Μακεδονία (Phil 4.15; 2 Cor 7.5); παρακαλεῖν (Phil 4.2; 2 Cor 7.6–7, 13); παράκλησις (Phil 2.1; 2 Cor 7.7, 13); παρουσία (Phil 1.26; 2.12; 2 Cor 7.6–7); παρισσοτέρως (Phil 1.14; 2 Cor 7.13, 15); πνεῦμα (Phil 1.19, 27; 2.1; 3.3; 4.23; 2 Cor 7.13); σάρξ (Phil 1.12, 24; 3.3–4; 2 Cor 7.5); σπλάγχνον (Phil 1.8; 2.1; 2 Cor 7.15); σωτηρία (Phil 1.19, 28; 2.12; 2 Cor 7.10); ταπεινός κτλ. (Phil 2.3, 8; 3.21; 4.12; 2 Cor 7.6); τρόμος (Phil 2.12; 2 Cor 7.15); ὑπακοῦ- (Phil 2.8, 12; 2 Cor 7.15); φόβος (Phil 2.12; 2 Cor 7.5, 11, 15); χαίρω κτλ. (Phil 1.18; 2.28; 3.1; 4.4, 10; 2 Cor 7.7, 9, 13, 16).

26 See also S. E. Porter and J. T. Reed, ‘Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm and its Exegetical Significance’, *NTS* 55 (1998) 213–31 (229–30).

27 First: R. Brewer, ‘The Meaning of *Politeuesthe* in Philippians 1.27’, *JBL* 73 (1954) 76–83.

28 E.g. P. Pilhofer, *Philippi I. Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas* (WUNT 87; Tübingen: Mohr, 1995) 122–39.

29 The formulation τὸ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν (1.29) is unique. The gospel in *Philippians* does not show the way to heaven, but relates to imprisonment and (legal) defence (1.7, 12, 16), struggle (1.27; 4.3), and (slave) labour (2.22).

30 This hard-to-translate term qualifies this place as community or city endowed with political civil rights. G. Lüderitz, ‘What is Politeuma?’, *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy* (ed. J. W. van Henten and P. W. van der Horst; AGJU 21; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 183–225 (187–8), defines ‘Politeuma as a technical term for an institution within a polis stands for the ruling class of a sovereign body with specific rights, voting procedures, etc. Whether all or only some of the citizens belong to the politeuma is regulated by the constitution . . .’ 2 Macc 12.7, however, quite clearly refers to πολίτευμα as a city. The idea implied in Phil 3.20, on the other hand, recalls Philo, who speaks of the return of the wise men’s souls to the πάτρια as τὸν οὐράνιον χῶρον ἐν ᾧ πολιτεύονται (*Conf.* 78; cf. *Gig.* 61).

the believers which Paul points out through his biography is directed toward this as yet unrealized future reality. As in 1 Thess 4.15–17, the believers move towards their home revealed from heaven. In other words, their gaze is directed upwards (see also 3.14). πολιτεύεσθαι and πολίτευμα have different connotations in Philippians and are consequently no argument in favour of a coherence of thought.

The same holds good also for the derivatives of μορφή, σχῆμα, and ταπεινοῦν in Phil 2.7 and Phil 3.20–21.³¹ The descriptions of Christ in 2.6–8 and 3.20–21 are almost contradictory. While Christ takes the form of a slave (μορφή δούλου) or humbles himself in the form of a human being (σχῆματι εὔρεθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν) in Phil 2.7–8, he is characterized in Phil 3.20 with a σῶμα τῆς δόξης, and Paul expects at this point that the reader’s σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως will be transformed and conformed to the glory of Christ. The eschatological ideas expressed in Phil 3.20–21 bring to mind those of 2 Cor 3.18–4.6 and remotely also of Rom 8.29, 1 Cor 15.51, and 1 Thess 4.15–18, but not of Phil 2.³²

The integrity of the letter to the Philippians cannot be proven by such formal arguments. Consequently, many interpreters seek a third way to prove the coherence of the letter by using a rhetorical, a structural, or an epistolographical approach.

According to Duane Watson, a rhetorical analysis shows ‘that Philippians is carefully constructed and written according to the principles of Greco-Roman rhetoric’.³³ Watson classifies Philippians as deliberative speech, because the letter intends to advise and dissuade its audience regarding the question: ‘what is a manner of life worthy of the gospel?’ (1.27–30). *Exordium* (1.3–26) and *narratio* (1.27–30) are followed by the *probatio* in three parts (2.1–11; 2.12–18; and 3.1–21), interrupted by a *digressio* (2.19–30). The third part of the *probatio* in Phil 3.1–21 ‘contrasts the life of Paul and the Philippians and their fates with the lives and fate of the opposition’, to show ‘that a life worthy of the gospel is evidence of destruction for the opposition, but “salvation” for the Philippians’ (see 1.28).³⁴ Bloomquist and Black also identify the rhetorical genre as deliberative speech, but they each offer a different analysis of its rhetorical structure.³⁵ All rhetorical analyses refer

31 Garland, ‘Composition’, 158–9.

32 For further examples, see Porter and Reed, ‘Philippians’, 228–9.

33 D. F. Watson, ‘A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and its Implications for the Unity Question’, *NT* 30 (1988) 57–88, 57.

34 D. F. Watson, ‘The Integration of Epistolary and Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians’, *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 388–426, 421. See Watson, ‘Rhetorical Analysis’, 72–6.

35 L. G. Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians* (JSNTSup 78; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993) 119–90, finds the *exordium* in 1.3–11; the *narratio* in 1.12–14, the *partitio* in 1.15–18a, the *confir-*

methodologically to George A. Kennedy. Kennedy, however, has characterized the rhetorical genre form of speech present in Philippians as 'to a great extent epideictical'.³⁶ Epideictic speech does not offer much by way of explaining a coherent structure of argumentation as it is much less formally structured.³⁷ Even if the question must remain open whether the analyses of ideal speeches presented in ancient or modern rhetoric textbooks are actually helpful in interpreting the writings of Paul, one interesting common aspect of the outlines stands out. Section 3.2–21 is variously termed *digressio* (digression), repetition, *probatio* (specification of the facts), *reprehensio* (refutation), or *refutatio* (negative proof). Its function in the construction of the speech, however, is unanimously seen as the argumentational introduction of a positive example opposed to contrasting examples.³⁸

This also applies to the structural analyses published in the mid-1990s which tried to prove an overall chiasmic structure for the letter. Peter Wick discovered two formal centres in the chiasmic construction of the letter, the christological hymn (Phil 2.5–11) as well as the call to rejoice in the Lord (3.1a), whereas Body Luter and Michelle Lee localized the centre of the chiasm in the two models of partnership in the Gospel, Timothy and Epaphroditus (2.17–3.1).³⁹ Accordingly, the corresponding chiasmic equivalent of 3.1–21 is found either in 1.12–30 or 2.5–16.⁴⁰ These differences and the lack of ancient proof for macro-chiasmic principles of composition or analysis cast doubt on the hypothesis of an elaborate or chiasmic structure of the epistle as a whole.⁴¹ Moreover the method centres on subjective reading strate-

matio in 1.18b–26, the *exhortatio* in 1.27–2.18, *exempla* in 2.19–30 and determines 3.1–16 as *reprehensio* and 3.17–4.7 as *exhortatio*. D. A. Black, 'The Discourse Structure of Philippians: A Study in Textlinguistics', *NT* 37 (1995) 16–49, sees in 1.3–11 the *exordium*, in 1.12–26 the *narratio*, in 1.27–3.21 the *argumentatio*, whereas 1.27–30 is the *propositio*, 2.1–30, the *probatio*, and he defines 3.1–21 as *refutatio*. At the same time he determines 3.1–4.9 as 'body subpart' or 'secondary development of the argument' (43).

36 G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina, 1984) 77. See also Wick, *Philippenerbrief*, 166–9.

37 Cf. Kennedy, *New Testament*, 24: 'In the epideictic the body of the speech between proem and epilogue is usually devoted to an orderly sequence of amplified topics . . .'

38 Garland, 'Composition', 164–5; Bloomquist, *Function*, 196.

39 According to Wick, *Philippenerbrief*, 39–69, the chiasmic sections are arranged in A (1.12–26; 3.1b–16), B (1.27–30; 3.17–21), C (2.1–11; 4.1–3), D (2.12–18; 4.4–9), E (2.19–30; 4.10–20). B. Luter and M. V. Lee, 'Philippians as Chiasmus: Key to the Structure, Unity and Theme Questions', *NTS* 41 (1995) 89–101, understand the centre (2.17–3.1a) to be framed by sections A (1.2–11; 4.10–20), B (1.12–26; 4.6–9), C (1.27–2.4; 4.1–5) and D (2.5–16; 3.1b–21).

40 Wick, *Philippenerbrief*, 85–106, discovers two sections in 3.1b–21. The subject of section A (1.12–26/3.1b–16) would be 'Paulus ein Nachahmer Christi' (85). By that he would be an example for all the things he demands in sections B (1.27–30/3.17–21) and D (2.12–18; 4.4–9) (106).

41 See also Porter and Reed, 'Philippians', 213–31. For Wick, *Philippenerbrief*, 173–80, the chiasmic structure of the letter is inspired by the Hebrew *parallelismus membrorum* in Old Testament poetry and psalms. However, as there is no quotation from the Psalms in Philippians, Wick

gies, namely paraphrasing the content of each individual section to get a summary of the subject matter or the specific step in the argument. Nevertheless, structural analytical contributions clearly characterize the function of section 3.2–21 similar to rhetorical ones: to Wick, the 'Hauptfunktion von A (Phil 1.12–26 / Phil 3.1b–16) im Argumentationszusammenhang ... dass sich Paulus den Philippnern als Vorbild gibt für das, was er von ihnen in der Paränese verlangt'.⁴² Luter and Lee highlight 'Reflecting the example of Christ, Paul in D (3.1b–21) is presented as one who humbles himself ... (and) urges them (the Philippians) to have the same attitude which was present in Christ and now is seen in himself'.⁴³

Finally, the structure of Philippians has been analysed along the conventions of ancient letter-writing. By comparing it to ancient letters on papyrus, Loveday Alexander classifies Philippians as a 'family-letter', the main purpose of which is to 'strengthen the "family" links between the apostle and the Christian community'.⁴⁴ In ch. 3, however, 'a predictable "family" letter' develops 'into a sermon-at-a-distance'.⁴⁵ This chapter has a subordinate function of 'exhortation and warnings' in the entirety of the epistle.⁴⁶ Other interpreters take up Paul Schubert's thesis 'that each thanksgiving ... announces clearly the subject matter of the letter' and discover the recurrence of words or themes from Phil 1.3–11 in the entire letter, including ch. 3.⁴⁷ To them, as well, ch. 3 is meant primarily to admonish 'steadfastness', in the face of potential oppositional danger. The chapter 'serves to illustrate the incipient dangers of certain tendencies ... among the Philippians'.⁴⁸ Schubert himself, however, has noted: 'The fact that there is no allusion at all to the vehement contents of ch. 3 may perhaps be taken as an argument for excluding this chapter from the original letter'.⁴⁹ A third group interprets Philippians within the context of Stoic philosophical letters as an 'hortatory or

points to a complete structural coherence to *Old Testament Psalms in Philippians*. Wick gives no evidence that Philippians is especially marked by doxological language, since doxological sections appear repeatedly in all of Paul's letters (e.g. Rom 9.5; 11.33–36; 15.7–13; 2 Cor 1.20; 4.15; 1 Thess 2.12).

42 Wick, 'Philippenerbrief', 105.

43 Luter and Lee, 'Philippians', 94.

44 Alexander, 'Letter-Forms', 94.

45 Alexander, 'Letter-Forms', 99.

46 Alexander, 'Letter-Forms', 99.

47 P. Schubert, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgivings* (BZNTW 20; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1939) 77. See Jewett, 'The Epistolary Thanksgiving and the Integrity of Philippians', *NT* 12 (1970) 40–53.

48 D. Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (NTSup 79; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 98.

49 Schubert, *Form and Function*, 77 n. 1. If one understands the expression of thanks as *proemium* in which the succeeding line of thought is developed, one could see in Phil 1.7–8 a preview of the 'report from imprisonment' in 1.12–26, in 1.9 the anticipation of 1.27–2.4 and mirrored in 1.10–11 the formulation of 2.14–16.

psychagogic letter of friendship':⁵⁰ the letter uses the typical strategy of philosophical exhortations in ch. 3, namely the confrontation of conflicting patterns of behaviour.⁵¹ 'A series of positive and negative models of how friends behave versus how enemies behave constitutes the core of the letter'.⁵² While it is questionable whether Philippians increasingly employs philosophical topics and language,⁵³ the basic assessment of Phil 3 appears to me to be correct.

This survey shows that the various methodological approaches have not yet succeeded in reaching a consensus regarding structure, rhetorical arrangement or epistolographical form of the letter. With regard to ch. 3, however, they come to astonishingly coherent assessments. Almost all agree that the detailed presentation of Paul's biography serves as an example, model, or ideal. Therefore, the paraenetic character of the section is emphasised. Further, it is stressed that the polemics against the opponents characterize only verses 3.2 and 3.18–19. The presentation of the opponents and the dissociation from them serve mainly as a contrast to Paul's self-portrayal or the behaviour demanded of the community.

There is disagreement regarding the function of the chapter in the outline of the entire letter. While some see a digression or repetition of reduced importance in ch. 3,⁵⁴ others place it in the centre of the argument.⁵⁵ Similarly, various points of reference between Phil 3.2–21 and the remainder of the epistle are seen. Some interpretations find the christological hymn mirrored in 2.5–11, others a reference to the biographical section 1.12–26, and still others the parenthesis of the community in 1.27–30 and/or 2.12–16/18.

These observations appear to be useful for the interpretation of Phil 3. Here, I will first try to employ them for the interpretation of Phil 3 as a fragment.

50 S. Stowers, 'Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven', *Pauline Theology I* (ed. J. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994) 105–22 (108).

51 Stowers, 'Friends and Enemies', 114–17.

52 Stowers, 'Friends and Enemies', 117.

53 In its specific focus on friendship between Paul and his community, Philippians does not differ from other letters of Paul. K. Thraede, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Brieftopik* (Zermata 48; Munich: Beck, 1970), classifies all of Paul's epistles as letters of friendship. K. Berger, 'Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament', *ANRW II* 25/2 (1984) 1031–579 (1389), disputes exactly that for all. For the further history of this research, see J. Reumann, 'Philippians, Especially Chapter 4 as a Letter of Friendship', *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (ed. J. Fitzgerald; NTSup 82; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 83–106.

54 Garland, 'Composition', 164–5.

55 Watson, 'Rhetorical Analysis'; Stowers, 'Friends', 117. See also Markus Müller, *Vom Schluss zum Ganzen. Zur Bedeutung des paulinischen Briefkorporusabschlusses* (FRLANT 172; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997) 202–4: 'zweiter Gipfel des Briefes'.

3. Philippians 3 in the Context of Early Jewish Testament Literature

In composition theories the so-called polemical letter C (3.1–21+4.8–9) is mostly interpreted as a reaction to a rival mission. Depending on whether one assumes an actual or just a possible appearance of the opponents in Philippi, the fragment will be placed in temporal distance to the writing of the letter from prison B.⁵⁶ However, the fact that an imprisonment is not explicitly mentioned does not mean that it should be excluded.⁵⁷ The belligerent or desperate tone of 3.2–4 and 3.18–19 would at least indicate great distress.

The theological classification of the group of opponents oscillates between Galatian or Corinthian missionaries, depending on whether one focuses on Phil 3.2–3 or on 3.18–19.⁵⁸ Whether their influence is discerned at all in Philippi is related to whether the key word τέλειοι in Phil 3.15 is interpreted as belonging to the oppositional group or to those in the community following it and whether a radically realized eschatology is detected behind it.⁵⁹ It is possible that Phil 3.15 is a quotation from the opponents or of some in the community itself, but the connection of this message with Phil 3.2–3 and 3.18–19 remains problematic. Contrary to Galatians or 2 Corinthians, Paul does not argue with the opponents and their followers. He rather confronts the shared convictions of the community in Phil 3.4 and 3.17 as well as 3.20–21 with the ones he attacks. The main part of the section is taken up by the review of his own conversion or calling, or more precisely the process of recognizing the radical break experience⁶⁰ – and by reflection on existence in the present. Central to this section is the biography presented as *typos* in retrospect, and for the present (3.4–14, 17). The paraenesis that includes the community in 3.15–17 and 4.8–9 refers specifically to this part. Additionally, there follows an eschatological prospect in 3.20–21.

Bruce Rahtjen's observation that letter C was written in a situation of imminent mortal threat and that formal elements of Jewish testament literature are present seems to be persuasive.⁶¹ The basic formal elements of the testament

⁵⁶ See n. 12.

⁵⁷ The fragmentary character of the part does not allow for definitive conclusions anyway; at least a praescript is missing.

⁵⁸ Schmithals, 'Irrlehrer', and Müller-Bardorf, 'Frage', point to the adversaries of 2 Corinthians as well as 1 Cor 1.18–3.4. Becker, *Paulus*, 340–50, and most later interpretations discover a relation to the Jewish missionaries in Galatians.

⁵⁹ H. Koester, 'The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment (Philippians III)', *NTS* 8 (1961–62) 317–32.

⁶⁰ The emphasis on knowing (γινώσκειν) and the idea of transformation in v. 11 suggests a comparison with sapiential conversion stories; see A. Standhartinger, 'Weisheit in Joseph und Aseneth und den paulinischen Briefen', *NTS* 47 (2001) 482–501 (498–500).

⁶¹ Rahtjen, 'Three Letters', 171–2; see also Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992) 193 n. 64 and Müller, *Schluss*, 187–8.

genre named by Rahtjen as autobiographical information, urging the descendants to avoid any faults or to imitate the behaviour distilled from the dying person's experience, and a short prediction of the future have been confirmed by current research into the genre, nowadays also called the farewell speech (Abschiedsrede) or bequeathing speech (Vermächtnisrede).⁶² Its origin is found in the last rites and deathbed blessings of the ancient orient, including, for example, in Gen 27.1–40; 49.29–50.14, etc. The narrative framing, the address to the descendants, and the concluding note of death and funeral common to testament literature are already present there. Decisive for the history of the genre, however, is the book of Deuteronomy, which has been conceived in its entirety as a farewell speech. Here, for the first time, the fundamental elements characterizing the genre, historical review, paraenesis and prediction of the future, become apparent. The testament genre enjoyed great popularity in the literature of the Second Temple Period. In apocalypticism the forecast, originally focused on exile and return, was expanded through heavenly insights into an apocalyptic prediction of the future (see, e.g., *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, *Ass. Mos.*).⁶³ The genre was highly esteemed and often used especially in Jewish wisdom literature,⁶⁴ where the biographical retrospection sections at once honour the exemplary lives of selected forbears and sages, and also portray warnings that can be learnt from their lives, and conclude with ethical exhortations that need to be followed. In sapiential testaments predictions of falling away from God and receiving God's mercy upon repentance do appear.⁶⁵ In the NT testaments (Acts 21.17–34; 2 Timothy; 2 Peter), these are transformed into predictions of the future appearance of opponents and heretics.⁶⁶ In Jewish testaments belonging to wisdom literature, the exhortations are furthermore characterized by a dualistic two-way ethic not to follow the works of Beliar but to

62 The latest and most comprehensive survey has been done by M. Winter, *Das Vermächtnis Jesu und die Abschiedsworte der Väter. Gattungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung der Vermächtnisrede im Blick auf Joh. 13–17* (FRLANT 161; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994) 9–213.

63 Winter, *Vermächtnis*, 207, with referral to *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, *Jub.* 20.1–13, etc. and *Lib. Ant.* 19.1–6; 23.1–14.

64 See *T. 12 Patr.*, *T. Job*, *T. Eva*. On *T. Eva* (= *Apoc. Mos* 15–30); see Standhartinger, 'Das Testament der Eva', *Kunst der Deutung – Deutung der Kunst. Beiträge zur Bibel, Antike und Gegenwartsliteratur* (ed. A. Standhartinger, H. Schwebel and F. Oertelt; Berlin: Lit, 2007) 73–85.

65 See, e.g., *T. Iss.* 6.1–4: 'Understand, my children, that in the last times your sons will abandon sincerity and align themselves with insatiable desire. Forsaking guiltlessness, they will ally themselves with villainy. Abandoning the commands of the Lord, they ally themselves with Beliar . . . Tell these things to your children, therefore, so that even though they might sin, they may speedily return to the Lord, because he is merciful . . .' (translation H. Kee in Charlesworth, *OTP*). See *T. Sim.* 5.4–6.7; *T. Lev.* 10.14–18; *T. Naph.* 4.1–5; 8.1; *T. Dan.* 5.4–13; *T. Gad.* 8.1–2; *T. Jos* 19.1–20.2; *T. Ben.* 9.1–2, etc.

66 See e.g. Acts 20.29–30; 2 Tim 3.1–9; 4.3–4; 2 Pet 2.1–22; 3.3.

choose God's commandments.⁶⁷ This choice is relevant to the actions and consequences for one's future.⁶⁸

The three main parts of the Jewish sapiential testament can also be observed in Phil 3: a biographical part in 3.4–14, paraenesis in 3.15–17 and 4.8–9, and a statement on the future in 3.20–21. The classification of the polemics against the opponents in Phil 3.2–3 and 3.18–19 is more difficult. Given the analogies in the NT, one could link them to the prediction of the future as well as a warning of oppositional groups. Those analogies would also explain the peculiar lack of concreteness regarding the opponents and their actual influence within the community. However, the opponents in Phil 3 are not a problem of the future. Philippians 3.2 as well as 3.18–19 represent the negation of the standpoint brought into play against it in 3.3–7 and 3.17, 20–21. The reconstruction is problematic because 3.18–19 uses general and unspecific invectives recurring in Greek-Hellenistic common-places.⁶⁹ It is possible that Phil 3 is influenced by the two-way ethics that determined the form of the sapiential testaments.

It is also quite unusual to see the triple βλέπετε introducing the fragment. Even though in the Jewish and NT testaments the individual configuring blocks of biography, ethical exhortation, and prediction of the future are not linearly but alternatively arranged,⁷⁰ this abrupt beginning with a warning is unique. A reason for this could be the possible shortening of the introductory verses during the integration into the final text, but the opening is also reminiscent of the introductory speeches of the Jewish testaments, formulated in second person plural

67 See e.g. *T. Lev.* 19.1: 'And now, my children, you have heard everything. Choose for yourselves light or darkness, the Law of the Lord or the works of Biliar'. See also *T. Rub.* 4.1; *T. Dan.* 4.7; 5.1; *T. Naph.* 2.6; *T. Ass.* 1.8; *T. Benj.* 3.1–4; 6.1.

68 *T. Sim.* 5.3–4: 'Guard yourselves (φυλάσσεσθε) from sexual promiscuity because fornication is the mother of all wicked deeds; it separates from God and leads men (προσεγγίζουσα) to Beliar. For I have seen in a copy of the book of Enoch that your sons will be ruined by promiscuity . . .' See also: *T. Iss.* 6.1–4; 7.7; *T. Dan* 2.1; 5.1; *T. Ben* 5.2; see also *Apoc. Mos.* 29.

69 Especially the formulations ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία and καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν can be detected as stereotyped attack on opponents in antiquity. For ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία, see, e.g., the common invective κοιλιοδαίμων used by a cynic in *Athenaeus* 97c; 100b. In Epicurean tradition the accusation against those who measure happiness and well-being by the enjoyments of the belly is traditional. Cf. Lucian *Patriae encomium* 10: μέτρον εὐδαιμονίας τὰς τῆς γαστρὸς ἡδονὰς τιθέμενοι (cf. *Cic. Nat. Deorum* 1.113). Philo *Ebr.* 95 calls a physically drunken person someone 'who made the body god' (θεοπλαστεῖν . . . τῷ σώματι). See further Euripides *Cyclops* 334–5; Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.6.8; Seneca *Vita Beata* 9.4. The formulation καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ belongs, as many have already shown, to the ancient discourse on honour and shame (see, e.g., Aristoteles *Rhetoric* 1384a) which is also reflected gnominally. See, e.g., Diogenes Laertertius *Lives* 7.112: αἰσχύνῃ δὲ φόβος ἀδοξίας ('Shame is a fear of discredit', Zenon). Cf. Theophrastus, *Characters* 9.1; Epictetus *Gnomolium* (Stob. 3.1.130 = Schenkl 6).

70 *T. Rub.*; *T. Sim.*; *T. Jud.*; *T. Ben.*

imperative.⁷¹ At the same time, the triple βλέπετε in Phil 3.2 expresses urgency and danger.

Nevertheless, section Phil 3 contains a string of other peculiarities in comparison to the Jewish testament genre:

1. The biographical review including the experience of conversion is standardized as in other testaments.⁷² Despite the detailed description of a noble birth and proof of an impeccable conduct in life, Paul reduces the actual biographical experience to a single turning point (3.7–8).
2. The biography is closed (3.7–8), and yet entirely unresolved. Paul can count himself among the τέλειοι and speak of ‘holding fast to what we have (already) attained’ (3.16), but at the same time his whole existence is completely unfinished: ‘Not that I have already obtained this or have already been made perfect . . .’ (3.12). Even though Paul tries to see the δύναμις of Christ’s resurrection, his own resurrection is to him anything but a certainty (3.11). This has hitherto puzzled exegetes as it apparently contradicts Phil 3.20–21.⁷³
3. The call to ‘join in imitating me’ (3.17) fits in well with the testament genre intended as an edification of the following generation.⁷⁴ But the question of succession is addressed in a far less unequivocal way than in Acts 20.28 or 2 Timothy: ‘observe those who live according to the *typos* you have in us’.⁷⁵ Many interpreters are inclined to think of Timothy (cf. 2.19–20) or other Pauline co-workers. However, the sentence from 3.17 seems to be grammatically clumsy. The rare compound συμμιμηταί is lacking the object expected in the dative and instead of ἔχετε τύπον με one reads τύπον ἡμῶς. This ‘us’ focuses on the same group already addressed in vv. 15–16. It is ultimately the same as the one embracing the community in v. 3. That is to say, Paul calls the whole community to be imitators (see also 4.8–9).

⁷¹ *T. Rub.* 1.5: Ἀκούσατε, ἀδελφοί μου, ἐνωτίσασθε Ῥουβὴμ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν ὅσα ἐντέλλομαι ὑμῖν *T. Iss.* 1.1; *T. Jos.* 1.2; *T. Sim.* 2.1; *T. Dan* 1.2; *T. Job* 1.6; 6.1; *Apoc. Mos* 15.1.

⁷² The conversion of the patriarch is a typical subject of *T. 12 Patr.* see: *T. Rub.* 2.1; *T. Sim.* 2.13; *T. Jud.* 15.4; 19.2–4; *T. Gad* 5.1–8.

⁷³ Ἐἴ πως in Phil 3.11 either introduces an indirect question (Blass/Debrunner/Funk § 375) or a conditional clause (indefinitus of the future, eventualis); cf. Randall E. Otto, “If possible I may attain the Resurrection from the Death” (Philippians 3:11), *CBQ* 57 (1995) 324–40. The latter emphasizes doubt and uncertainty.

⁷⁴ In *T. Benj.* 3.1 it is explicitly stated: μιμούμενοι τὸν ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὄσιον ἄνδρα Ἰωσήφ (cf. *T. Benj.* 4.1; *T. Ass.* 4.3; *T. Abr. A* 20.15. The ethically exemplary life of the patriarch is always thought of as an example for the following generations, see: *T. Jud* 13.1; *T. Seb.* 5.1; *T. Naph.* 2.9; *T. Job* 27.7 etc.

⁷⁵ Cf. 2 Tim 1.6; 2.1–8. Successor and succession is one of the main themes of the testament genre, see e.g. Deut 30–31; Josh. 23; *Lib. Ant.* 24.4; 33.4; *Ass. Mos.* 1.7–9, etc.

4. The μίμησις (imitation) certainly neither means 'obedience' nor is it a call to live a life modelled after an abstract idea of Christ.⁷⁶ As Lukas Borman has shown, in antiquity μίμησις rather means 'kreative Aneignung' in the sense of 'einer imaginativ-emphatischen Neuinszenierung, die selbst Wirkung hat'.⁷⁷ In Philippians, the instigation to creative adaptation goes so far that Paul can say, 'and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you' (3.15b).⁷⁸ Only in one respect does Paul set a limit – that is, to stay on the side of (στοιχεῖν) the (already) attained.⁷⁹
5. That is exactly what the rare compound συμμιμηταί is aiming at.⁸⁰ It refers back to συμμορφιζόμενος of v. 10 and points forward to σύμμορφος in v. 21.⁸¹ Paul dedicates his biography or rather – in the sense of achievements in life – 'anti-biography' completely to the experience of Christ. Recognizing the power of the resurrection leads to communion with God through suffering, through 'becoming like him in his death'. Therefore Paul has to dismiss everything that could count as proof of ones own life's achievements. His biographical report is modelled in coherence with the δύναμις that declared itself in solidarity with suffering and death.

In my view the fragment Phil 3.2–21 and 4.8–9 is to be understood best as a sapiential testament written and smuggled out of prison by Paul in a situation of

76 W. Michaelis' (Art. μίμησις κτλ., *ThWNT* 4 [1942] 661–78, 670) hypothesis that 'imitation' is an 'expression of obedience' has been rightly criticized many times. But also the alternative hypothesis that Paul set himself or Christ as paradigm overlooks in a similar way the discussion on μίμησις in ancient art and drama theory. J. A. Brant, 'The Place of *mimēsis* in Paul's Thought', *SR* 22 (1993) 285–300 (287) has pointed out on the contrary: 'A survey of Greek literature indicates that the idea that *mimēsis* produce a copy appears infrequently' (287). Instead, 'the imitator is involved in the conscious effort to bring an idea to expression' (288).

77 Bormann, 'Reflexionen über Sterben und Tod bei Paulus', *Das Ende des Paulus. Historische, theologische und literaturgeschichtliche Aspekte* (ed. F.-W. Horn; BZBW 106; Berlin/New York: W. de Gruyter, 2001) 307–30 (313, 315).

78 Some scholars try to defuse this sentence as an ironic allusion to the opponents or their adherents in the community praising themselves for their revelations. Others identify τοῦτο from v. 15b with τοῦτο from v. 15a and bind the revelation to a 'directive of the apostle' (Gnilka). Such an interpretation appears grammatically difficult to me: the reference of τοῦτο to τι is much easier. There is no indication in the text that τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν ἀποκαλύψει aims at a correction of the Philippian theology. At this point it seems that the apostle does not meet the expectation of modern interpreters.

79 Blass/Debrunner/Funk §449.2: πλὴν 'means . . . "only, in any case" in Paul, used to conclude a discussion and emphasize what is essential'.

80 There is some evidence for the compound συμμιμῆσθαι in Platon *Politicus* 274d, 'the whole universe, which we imitate (συμμιμούμενοι) and follow through all time', and in Mauricios *Strategikon* 8.2.81, a late antique collection of military rules and sayings, which warns of co-imitating the strategy of the enemies.

81 W. Schenk, *Die Philippbriefe des Paulus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984) 319–20.

gravest mortal danger – possibly the situation of 2 Cor 1.8–9. It is his – then still early – letter of farewell to the community close to him where he presents them with his christologically reflected biography.⁸² The introductory warnings indicate more than just the fear for his beloved community; they express primarily the urgency and danger of the present situation. Hope for heavenly *Politeuma* including a Saviour (σωτήρ) and hope for the change of the ‘vile body’ in 3.20–21 could also be understood against a backdrop of torture and mortal fear.

The whole fragment is suffused with the polarity of what has already been attained (3.7–8, 15–17) and straining forward to what lies ahead (3.12–14), of earthly existence (3.10–11) and heavenly hope (3.20–21). Earthly existence is emphasized, however, and hope nowhere a certainty yet attained. In the fragment Paul presents himself as model, yet dismisses any kind of religious achievement. This presents a major break through the bounds of the genre of which it is part.

Paul rejects the image of a religious hero whose religious achievement should be the pride of, and example to his followers. He, on the contrary, despises achievement and fame as ‘rubbish’ (3.8). Therefore Paul refuses to introduce successors. The community has already joined Paul on this way (3.15–17). Like him they together try to recognize the δύναμις that appears in justification, God’s solidarity with suffering and death. Letter C, according to my hypothesis, originally was Paul’s ‘anti-testament’ based on the genre of Jewish sapiential testament and sent to Philippi during a life-threatening situation.

The community has followed the call to creative adaptation, as the existence of the Philippians proves. By integrating it into the present final text, they have preserved as well as furthered its meaning.

4. Philippians 3 in the Canonical Letter

A string of evidence indicates an editing of the letter in Philippi at the latest in the mid-second century.⁸³ As Polycarp shows in his own letter to the Philippians (Pol. *Phil.* 13.1), the community actively pursued the dissemination of Paul’s letter. In doing so and also by inserting the thank you note for the monetary donation at the end of the letter, the community also created ‘a nice memorial’ to themselves.⁸⁴

82 The desperate warning in vv. 2–3 and 18–19 could well have been formulated under the influence of the conflict in Corinth (see 2 Cor 2.14–6.13; 7.2.–4; 10–13) and at the same time in retrospect to the conflict in Galatia. Assuming an imprisonment in Ephesus, the conflict in Corinth would then be in the toughest phase for Paul.

83 Rahtjen, ‘Three Letters’, 173; Bornkamm, ‘Philippierbrief’, 202–5; Gnllka, *Philippierbrief*, 11–18; Bormann, *Philippi*, 128–36.

84 Bornkamm, ‘Philippierbrief’, 203.

Polycarp of Smyrna is also the first known reader of Paul's letter to the Philippians.⁸⁵ His use of Philippians is of help in finding out the principles of editorship employed. At the very beginning he already praises the community, alluding to Phil 1.3–11, for giving shelter to martyrs. In *Pol. Phil.* 9.1–2, Polycarp mentions the patience they had personally witnessed in 'Paul and all apostles'. To Polycarp, Philippians marks the final words of a martyr written to his beloved community.⁸⁶

The arrangement of fragments A and B of Philippians can be explained by Polycarp's reading. Letter B, written in prison, sets in the frame of a complete letter a farewell address to the beloved community.⁸⁷ What is already expressed in letter B – the fellowship in struggle and suffering and the exemplary life of the community – is clearly pointed out in the thank you note or receipt at the end of the letter (Phil 4.10–20).⁸⁸ Only the 'favourite community' stands by the persecuted apostle. Their exceptional commendation is mentioned several times by Polycarp.⁸⁹ But why is it taken up by letter C?

Polycarp, presumably, and not incorrectly, reads Philippians as a farewell speech or testament. The final text of Philippians is also reminiscent of the testament genre.⁹⁰ Biographical reviews (1.12–26; 3.4–14; 4.10–17), paraenesis or ethical exhortations (1.27–2.30; 3.15–19; 4.2–9), and statements on the future (1.5–6, 10–11; 2.15; 3.14, 20–21; 4.1, 3, 5, 18–19) alternate. Hard times are predicted for the community (1.28–30; 2.3–4, 18–19), but at the same time so is their salvation on the day of Judgment (1.5–6, 10–11; 2.12, 15; 4.18–19) and the reward to be expected then (1.11; 3.20–21; 4.3–4, 18–19).⁹¹ In the light of Paul's imminent death many allusions to martyrdom can be found. Such noteworthy suffering is alluded to not only in chs.

85 It is obvious that Polycarp has read Phil 1–2 (see *Pol. Phil.* 1.1–3; 9.2; 11.3). There could be some allusion to Phil 3.15 and 3.18 in *Pol. Phil.* 12.3, but without proof of literary influence. Judging by the diverse information presupposed in *Pol. Phil.* 9 and 13 regarding Ignatius, the assumption of a letter compilation seems also plausible in Polycarp's work. The first letter (*Pol. Phil.* 13–14) seems to be written prior to 117, the second several decades later. The formulation τὰ παρ' ὑμῶν . . . γράμματα (*Pol. Phil.* 13.1) sadly does not give any hint whether Polycarp is referring to one or more texts. See the discussion in W. Bauer and H. Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarpbrief* (HNT 18; Tübingen: Mohr, 1985) 116.

86 Polycarp calls Paul μακάριος (3.1–2); cf. *beatus* 11.3. See *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 1.1; 19.1; 21.22 and Bauer and Paulsen, *Briefe*, 116.

87 Gnlika, *Philippierbrief*, 16.

88 Bormann, *Philippi*, 133–6.

89 *Pol. Phil.* 3.2; 11.3.

90 Rahtjen, 'Three Letters', 173.

91 It is not clear whether χάρα belongs as a *terminus technicus* in the language of martyrdom already in the second century. However, Phil 1.18–19 and 2.17 can be read like this. If one discovers the suture between letters C and B in 4.4 a parenthesis is created by the word 'rejoice', which is then reinforced by the eschatological exclamation 'the Lord is near'. If one places the suture in 4.1, 'the crown' as a further *terminus technicus* of martyriological language is mentioned (see *4 Macc* 17.15; *Wis* 4.2; *2 Bar* 15.8; *Rev* 2.10; *2 Tim* 4.8).

1 and 2 (1.12–23, 30; 2.17–18) but also in phrases like ‘becoming like him in his death’ (3.10), ‘prize of the heavenly call of God’ (3.14), or ‘it was kind of you to share my distress’ (4.14).⁹²

But why is the fragment integrated into the concluding paraenesis of letter B? At this point recognition of the rhetorical, structural, and epistolographical analyses of the final text is of paramount importance. Here, Phil 3.2–21 is seen as an example with a paraenetic function. The example of Paul appears as the summit in the line of Timothy and Epaphroditus, where the achievements of both co-workers are surpassed. While Timothy is proven in service to the gospel (2.21–22), Paul dedicates his life to the knowledge of Christ. While the community’s apostle Epaphroditus ‘came close to death, for the work of Christ’ (2.30), Paul wants to know the fellowship of Christ’s suffering ‘by becoming like him in his death’ (3.11). Paul outdoes Timothy and Epaphroditus by combining the works of both in himself and above all by having – in the meanwhile – attained salvation (1.29), been poured out as a libation over the sacrifice (2.17), pressed on towards the goal for the prize of God’s heavenly call, and counted among those who have been made perfect (3.12, 15).

In the final text Phil 3 picks up the biographical section 1.12–26 (4.10–15) and strengthens its paraenetic function (1.27–2.16). The community is called to follow the example of Paul whose struggle and suffering they had seen (1.29–30; 3.17). His already attained heavenly prize (3.14) is now also promised to them (1.6, 10; 3.20–21; 4.3, 19–20). This can be achieved by defending themselves against the opposition on all sides (1.28; 3.2–3, 18–19) and steadfastly fighting and remaining on the gospel’s side along with the apostle (1.7, 19–20, 27–8; 3.2–3, 17–21; 4.1, 3, 9).

The integration of Paul’s farewell address or ‘anti-testament’ C between letters B and A highlights the testamentary character of the final text. However, it also transforms the latter significantly. Paul’s initial critical adaptation of the genre is hardly recognizable. In the final text the biographical review is returned to its initial function and purpose within the sapiential testament genre.

5. Join in Imitating Me!

By editing the letters to its present canonical form, the Philippian community actually became imitators of Paul. Like him, they wrote a testament that seeks to summarize the theological biography of Paul and make it accessible to those who came later. By this creative adaptation in a changed situation the heritage

⁹² It is the lasting contribution of E. Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon* (KEK 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 13 ed. 1964 [1928]), to have perceived the possibility of a martyrological interpretation of the entire epistle to the Philippians. The perspective in the original fragment, however, appears to me to be a (still) different one.

had also been transformed. But important aspects of the legacy could be saved. The Philippians did not ordain single individuals as successors of Paul. The whole community is called to join in imitation. It still is the community in which the gospel and Paul's work become apparent.

The critical adaptation of the testament genre as it could be seen in Phil 3.2–21 and 4.8–9 has, however, disappeared. In the context of the canonical letter, Phil 3 presents nothing more than an exemplary biography, as one may observe in the testament genre. In the canonical letter, Paul, in fact, became an example and model. The apostle yet again presents the highly condensed quintessence of his life's theology as exhortation to the community succeeding him, and formulates encouragements and warnings for life, both in retrospect and prospect, on transcendence accessible (only) to him. Paul's biography, his self-understanding in the sense of the *imitatio* Christi, as dismissal of any kind of religious achievement, changes in the final text to the depiction of a religious hero whose exceptional personality and exhortations could lead onto the path to salvation. This is the important difference resulting from the interpretation of Phil 3 within and without the context of the entire canonical epistle.